



# Health Awareness

## Americans 50 And Older Recommended For Influenza Vaccination To Protect Themselves, Loved Ones

### *Getting Vaccinated Into December, January and Even Later Beneficial*

(NAPSA)—Many Americans 50 years of age and older are not only responsible for their own health, but also for protecting their loved ones against diseases like influenza, also called “the flu.” Influenza is a serious illness that can cause many to miss work or school and can have severe complications, such as pneumonia and sometimes death. Vaccination every year is the best way to help prevent influenza, and is particularly important for anyone aged 50 and older.

A recent National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) survey found many don't get influenza vaccine each year because they don't think they can spread this dangerous virus to their friends, family and co-workers. But not getting vaccinated puts themselves and others at risk of getting sick from influenza. In fact, many aged 50 and older take care of young children, grandchildren and older parents, who are at increased risk for serious influenza-related complications.

“Not getting influenza vaccine every year can put your household at risk for complications like pneumonia, missed work and school days, trips to the hospital and sometimes death,” said NFID Vice President William Schaffner, M.D., Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. “Influenza is much more severe than the common cold. Patients should talk to their health care providers about prevention and treatment options



### **Influenza infects up to one in five Americans every year.**

for themselves and their loved ones.”

In addition, about one in three adults between 50 and 64 years has a medical condition (like diabetes or heart disease) that places them at higher risk for complications caused by influenza. If someone with one of these conditions gets influenza, they could become seriously ill.

“Once vaccinated, you are protected within two weeks and this lasts throughout the season,” said Dr. Schaffner. “It is important to be immunized against influenza every year because the viruses that cause the disease often change, and a new vaccine is made before each season.”

Annual influenza vaccination is also recommended for children 6 months up to 5 years of age, pregnant women, anyone 6 months or older with a chronic medical condition (such as asthma or diabetes) and close contacts of these groups (including parents, grandparents, siblings, health care

workers and baby-sitters). Anyone else who wishes to reduce his or her risk for influenza should also get vaccinated.

### **About Influenza**

Influenza is caused by a virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs. It is spread through the air by sneezing and coughing or by direct contact with people who have the disease. People who get influenza can suffer from fever, dry cough, headache, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and muscle aches. Influenza can also cause extreme fatigue lasting several days to weeks.

Influenza infects up to one in five Americans, and causes about 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations in the U.S. each year.

Anti-viral medications can be effective for the treatment of influenza and its symptoms. They can also be prescribed to anyone with egg allergies who cannot receive influenza vaccine. Talk to your health care provider about what treatment options are right for you if you get influenza.

### **For More Information**

For more information, contact your health care provider or visit the NFID Web site ([www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org)).

### **About NFID**

NFID is a nonprofit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases.